



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

20 August 2019

*Dear Secretary of State,*

**Re: Lower Thames crossing**

I write to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Transport. With Thurrock a thriving port and logistics centre I can guarantee I will be making many representations to you.

You will be aware that there is a commitment to construct a new Lower Thames crossing and preparations are taking place in earnest. Whilst I fully appreciate the need for an additional crossing, I remain resolutely opposed to the route that is planned to join the new tunnel to the M25 on the North bank of the Thames.

It has now become very clear that the plans have highlighted significant construction difficulties as a consequence of taking the road through Fenland and landfill. I understand that these challenges have led to a significant increase in the cost, not least because the road will have to be elevated across a lengthy viaduct. As well as being unsightly, this will be very expensive. Against this background I would like to advise that it is not too late to change aspects of this route and I am writing to state that Highways England should think again and redesign the crossing based on the Route 4 option rather than the existing Route 3.

I should state at the outset that the existing route is widely opposed across Thurrock, and has been since it was first mooted in 2009. It runs through the borough, close to residential communities, yet there is no connectivity to it for residents of Thurrock. For a Government that its set on tackling air quality, it seems a retrograde step to plough a motorway through the borough that none of use can even use.

The design is intended to divert Dover Port traffic away from the M25, but there is no connectivity for any of the Ports in Thurrock. Again I do not see why the borough of Thurrock should be forced to absorb this new motorway without any benefit for the local port traffic.

The current route also severely limits the opportunity for the Borough to deliver its future housing requirements. As the route effectively runs around existing residential communities, the ability to expand them is greatly curtailed. You will understand that we have ambitions to deliver

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THURROCK





many thousands of new houses and again it seem perverse that the Government which is keen to see the significant expansion of housing construction, particularly in the Thames Estuary, continues to press ahead with this flawed scheme.

The route 4 option is essentially the same as the current route up until the tunnel emerges on the North bank. It then effectively bypasses the residential communities in Thurrock to head towards the A127 and joins the M25 at Junction 29. My contention is that this route has never received a proper appraisal.

Route 4 was only brought forward at the final stage of the consultation, largely I believe, in response to the representations I had made against route 3, known previously as option C. In bringing forward this variant of the route, HE also made clear its clear preference in favour its favoured route of option 3. On that basis it was a somewhat loaded consultation. And naturally, given the national nature of the consultation, the responses did come down overwhelmingly in favour of HE's preferred route.

However if one looks at the local responses from Thurrock, support was overwhelmingly in favour of route 4. Given that it is the people of Thurrock who will have to deal with the consequences of this new crossing, I do not believe that due weight has been paid to the preferences of respondents in Thurrock.

It should be added that by joining the new road with the A127, there will of course be a need for an expansion in capacity on this road. However, this has been identified as the key infrastructure investment to enable expansion of housing across South Essex. There seems to be a unique opportunity here to properly join up competing policy objectives in a holistic way to the benefit of the whole of this community. Ultimately HE have to bring forward a scheme which delivers on their strategic national policy objective but it is incumbent on us as politicians to make sure that projects work for local communities and don't get in the way of other policy objectives.

All people who work, live or employ people in Thurrock should be advantaged by this new crossing. Under the present design they are not. Given that Highways England are to bring forward further consultation I would respectfully suggest that a fundamental rethink should take place, not least given the increased financial cost demanded by the existing scheme. My specific asks are:



- a. **Highways England to revisit the route on the North side of the Thames and alter it to join the M25 via the A127 rather than via a new junction.**
- b. **Highways England should bring forward a fresh consultation based on a new route which is well away from existing residential communities. It should bring forward a proposal based on the proposed route 4.**
- c. **Any major road scheme going through Thurrock should seek to divert traffic away from Thurrock's local road infrastructure. The scheme must therefore include a Tilbury link road to enable the diversion of Port traffic from the local road network in Tilbury**

with all good wishes  
Jill

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